

Selling Futures: Globalisation and International Education



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The work presented in this thesis is, to the best of my knowledge and belief, original except as acknowledged in the text. I hereby declare that I have not submitted this material either in whole or in part, for a degree at the University of Queensland or any other institution.

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Dedication

For Renato and our girls.

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Abstract

This thesis examines how power and knowledge come together in promotional discourses to form particular constructions of student subjectivity and particular constructions of the international university. It maps what is visible and sayable about international students and the international university and in doing so analyses the operations of power and knowledge within international education markets. Two key questions are pursued by this thesis. First, how do discourses of international education perceive and construct understandings of the international student? Second, how do networks of governmental and institutional practices shape the contemporary international university? More specifically, how is the international university implicated in the globalisation of higher education?

Using governmentality as an analytical framework and Foucault's archaeological method, this study undertakes a cross national analysis of both macro-contextual forces and micropractices. It sources data from four national settings which include the three major 'producers' of international education, the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia, and a postcolonial consumer, Singapore, which is also an aspiring provider of international education. To identify what is visible and sayable about international students and the international university the following sets of data are analysed: image, written text, interviews and the spaces and places which constitute international education networks ('spatial scripts').

Three subjectivities are implied of the international student and 'educated subject' across all three producer settings: a passive 'other' to be tutored into the ways of the West, an elite 'other' whose allegiances are to be cultivated and an economic subject steeped in competitive individualism who holds an instrumentalist orientation to education.

The findings of this thesis also suggest that the dominant discursive practices in international education markets are neocolonial and neoliberal. The demands of responding to the economic dimensions of globalisation has steered the international university to privilege an institutional subjectivity which is supportive of the neoliberal state. It is a central instrumentality in upholding the state's national interest. In this regard, the international university depicts a historical continuity with its predecessor, the modernist university.

At the same time, the rules of an older lexicon of power remain in place in the international university. These are premised on the West as an educator of the 'other' and work against reversing the present unequal flows of influence to more reciprocal intellectual exchanges. Dominant constructions of international education are thus, antithetical to the theoretical principles of 'interdependence' and 'interconnectedness' espoused by key globalisation theorists.

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